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SUBJECT: IRAQI GOVERNMENT ANBAR TRIBES CONFERENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (SBU) SUMMARY: Representatives from Anbar tribes gathered with local and national government officials October 7 in Baghdad to pledge cooperation in restoring security and promoting economic development in the heavily-Sunni province. Conference participants highlighted mounting frustrations Anbaris feel at the lack of GOI focus on improving the security situation, and unfulfilled GOI promises of money for Anbar. PM Maliki, VP Hashimi and others gave strong statements of support for this initiative, with Finance Minister Bayan Jabr pledging that long-held reconstruction funds for Anbar would be released. Minister of State for National Security Affairs Shirwan Wa'ili said that a local "national security office" would open in Anbar. Feedback from attendees was positive. However, given competing claims of legitimacy among tribal sheikhs in leading the fight against Anbar terrorists, Governor Alwani faces a long battle to get cooperation from a broad range of sheikhs. END SUMMARY.

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ANBAR IN THE SPOTLIGHT  
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**¶2.** (C) The October 7 Anbar Tribes Conference, sponsored by Sunni Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi's office in coordination with Deputy Minister of Minerals and Industry Mohammed Abdullah Zein Al-Ani (who chairs the special advisory committee on Anbar reconstruction), brought together GOI national and local level officials and approximately 50-60 sheikhs. Many conference attendees (all male except one) traveled to Baghdad from Anbar for the event and appeared pleased with the opportunity to directly address the PM and others on issues affecting Anbar. In a press event at the conference's end, a solemn PM Maliki, VP Hashimi and Ambassador Khalilzad gave brief statements in support of the initiative, with twenty to thirty sheikhs standing behind them. Sunni DPM Salam Zawbai was in attendance as well. Although he is from Anbar and has his political base there (unlike VP Hashimi, who is from Baghdad), he was clearly there in a symbolic capacity only. Embassy contacts have said that sour relations between himself and PM Maliki led the PM to turn to Hashimi when looking for a Sunni to partner with on this Anbar tribal outreach initiative.

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PM MALIKI - TURNING THE PAGE IN RELATIONS  
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**¶3.** (SBU) PM Maliki opened with a speech calling the conference an opportunity to "turn the page from mistaken policies" toward the province. He said that stopping violence and releasing the "necessary funds" to rebuild Anbar were priorities. In a show of support, he turned to Anbar Governor Ma'moun Alwani and provincial council (PC) Chair Abdalsalaam Abdullah and emphasized that local

government officials would be responsible for distributing the soon-to-be disbursed GOI funds to Anbar. Maliki encouraged conference attendees to "form committees, and set an agenda" to get Anbar out of its current crisis. Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, who organized the conference and has been lobbying heavily for increased GOI support to Anbar, highlighted the gravity of the situation and called for conference participants to think in terms of solutions and compromises and pledged the full support of the GOI in seeing this initiative "through to the end".

¶4. (SBU) Governor Ma'moun Alwani and PC Chair Abdalsalaam Abdullah called for improved communication between local and central government. They expressed their desire to strengthen ties with tribal sheikhs and coordinate more closely with them on security matters. They called for implementing "better mechanisms" for interfacing with CF forces and transferring "more authorities" to local IP and IA forces.

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ANBAR NEEDS BETTER SECURITY, ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE  
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¶5. (SBU) A number of sheikhs and Council of Representatives (CoR) members representing Anbar's various regions gave brief speeches highlighting the needs of the provinces. Sheikh Salih Al-Nouri from Aamiriyah (Fallujah) said that for five months, there had been a "security vacuum" in this key region. He called for training local forces to save Aamiriyah against terrorists, as the "sons of Anbar" were best suited to defend their people. He said that sheikhs, in particular, required extra protection because they were frequently targeted. Sheikh Saad

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Al-Fahdawi from Zawba called for greater focus on highway protection and corruption along the Iraqi-Syrian border, where customs police were taking bribes and allowing in terrorists. In a fiery, impassioned speech, Al-Fahdawi blamed Governor Alwani, PC Chair Abdullah and the Minister of Finance for the fact that Anbar had yet to see GOI-promised funds (with Minister of Finance Jabr Bayan rolling his eyes at this comment). Al-Fahdawi received strong applause when he claimed that since Coalition Forces (CF) "know the problems that exist and could stop it in one week if they wanted to," they must be allowing the violence to continue on purpose.

¶6. (SBU) CoR members from Anbar offered constructive suggestions geared toward reconciliation and economic development. Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) representative Salman Ali Hassan Al-Jumaili said that finding a way forward on processing and releasing detainees under CF custody would go a long way toward progress on reconciliation. He and other CoR members such as Hewar's Mustafa Al Heti pointed out that the unemployed population, mostly former police, intelligence services officers and soldiers were a great resource but had no prospects for employment. CoR members called for compensation of victims of violence, and giving weapons permits to sheikhs so that their unlicensed weapons would not be confiscated each time their homes were searched by CF forces. They called for rebuilding infrastructure as well, with one CoR member citing Fallujah Hospital as an example. As the only functioning hospital in Anbar, the heavy demand on its services in the face of severe resource constraints has caused it to resort to providing substandard service.

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THE STARTING PLAN  
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¶7. (SBU) Finance Minister Bayan Jabr pledged that funds for Anbar would immediately be disbursed to the

governorate. (NOTE: According to Emboff, Governor Alwani has now received some USD 37 million in GOI funds and has begun working with sheikhs and local officials on project development. END NOTE.) Minister of State for National Security Shirwan Wa'ili also attended and announced that a branch office for national security would begin operations in Anbar shortly (NOTE: In an October 12 meeting with Emboffs, Wa'ili said that he had not yet selected a site for the office but that on October 11 he signed the order to open the office. END NOTE.)

**¶8.** (SBU) The recommendations listed in the closing statement of the conference called for:

--Creating a climate of security and safety where rule of law would prevail and local officials felt safe enough to carry out their administrative and governance duties;  
--Forming a "central coordination agency" composed of PC members and local tribal sheikhs that would come to a "common vision" in addressing the problems that plague Anbar;  
--Forming security and economic committees with tribal sheikh participation and activating the role of sheikhs in supporting the security apparatuses;  
--Opening police and army recruiting centers in "safe havens" of Anbar;  
--Issuing weapons permits to tribal sheikhs, along with 50 members of each tribe "who represent the tribes protection force";  
--Opening up safe places where people can go get identity documents, such as national ID cards and passports;  
--Instituting a plan to protect the highway in cooperation with local government, MOI and MOD;  
--Enforcing border protection;  
--Releasing compensation funds for Fallujah;  
--Setting aside compensation funds in the 2007 budget for the rest of Anbar;  
-Asking CF to withdraw from the cities where Iraqi Security Services are completely formed.

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COMPETING CLAIMS TO ANBAR TRIBES INITIATIVE  
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**¶9.** (C) Notably absent from the conference was prominent Anbari Sheikh Sittar and his contingent. Sittar recently approached PRT officials seeking greater cooperation with CF on fighting terrorists. Sheikh Sittar is frequently critical of Alwani and did not attend the October 7 conference, which he told PRT officials that he deemed as too heavily influenced by the IIP agenda.

**¶10.** (C) Sheikh Moayad Al Hmayshi gave an interview

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following the conference where he claimed that many sheikhs do not support Governor Alwani and instead had formed the "Wakefulness Council"; other press reports called it the Salvation Council.

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COMMENT  
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**¶11.** (C) Al Hmayshi's statement may be a response to reports of an "Emergency Council" of sheikhs appointed by PM Maliki at a meeting he convened with Governor Alwani, PC Chair Abdullah and a smaller group of sheikhs after the conference.

With competing claims among tribal sheikhs to legitimacy in the struggle against terrorism, Governor Alwani faces a political battle to gain buy-in and achieve cohesion among the various factions. But armed with the PM's support for efforts to engage tribal sheikhs under the rubric of national reconciliation and recently disbursed GOI funds for reconstruction, Governor Alwani is off to a good start.

